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PROFESSOR HARNACK'S "WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?"¹

THAT Professor Harnack's lectures on the essentials of Christianity had some bearing on Judaism was known, and made known, soon enough. Scarcely a Jewish periodical but contained some article on Harnack and Judaism². And the theme is of quite sufficient interest to permit of another essay treated from a somewhat different standpoint, and with an eye on readers to whom Harnack's lectures are known by name only.

There are two reasons why Prof. Harnack's "What is Christianity?" should be of special interest to Jewish readers. In the first place because of Harnack's direct references to Judaism. In view of recent articles, in the *Hibbert Journal*, on Christian treatment of Judaism, it may be of special interest to examine Harnack's lectures as an illustration in this respect. In the second place, because some of the finest passages in the book, those namely in which Prof. Harnack pleads in the cause of religion, are as applicable to present-day Jews as they are to Christians, and they are well worth noting. In view of recent events these remarks may have special significance for our Anglo-Jewish community.

And first a word about Prof. Harnack's method of treating his subject. Eminent scholar though he is, he seems, for the time, to lay aside his book-learning, and instead of telling us what Christianity is, or what he knows of

¹ A paper read before the Schechter Society, Cambridge, Feb. 27, 1903.

² See, e. g., Dr. F. Perles's essay in the *JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW*, Vol. XIV, p. 517.

Christian doctrine and its history, he chiefly tells us what Christianity is to him, what he feels it to be. This subjective, or personal, method infuses unusual vitality and warmth into his account. Take up the familiar textbooks on religion. Most of them read like examination cribs. They generally contain little more than a barren analysis of certain dogmas and doctrines, interspersed with some formal homiletics. There are exceptions, of course. To some extent, however, such faults are inevitable in an objective treatment of religion. Hence when first reading Prof. Harnack's account of Christianity it was the present writer's fervent wish that some one might render a similar service to Judaism. That wish has since then been realized, and more than realized. Mr. Montefiore's essay on Liberal Judaism has the virtues without the faults of Prof. Harnack's method of treatment. For the personal presentation of religion has its weak points as well as its strong ones. From a practical point of view (and in religion that is the chief consideration) it is the most commendable treatment, because the only one likely to exercise any influence. But it has the defects of its strength. Being personal it cannot at the same time be accurate as an objective account of the particular creed, that is, as known and felt by the rank and file of its professors, and as known in history. This, as already suggested, is by no means a defect from the standpoint of practical religion, but it is a serious defect from the standpoint of history and historic theology, especially so if the writer fails to recognize and duly appreciate the peculiar character of his method¹.

¹ Prof. Harnack tells us, in his Preface, that his treatment of his theme is "purely historical." This can, however, scarcely mean more than that part of the book is devoted to a critical review of historic Christianity from Prof. Harnack's own peculiar standpoint. For there can be little doubt that the lectures throw considerably more light on the religion of Prof. Harnack than on historic Christianity. Of course even the genuinely objective or historical treatment of any movement must be personal or subjective to some little extent, in so far at least as the author is necessarily expressing *his* views on his theme. But Prof. Harnack's

And in this respect we may observe a striking difference between Prof. Harnack and Mr. Montefiore. Mr. Montefiore emphasizes, almost to a fault, the subjective character of his essay. He clearly feels his Judaism to be Judaism, quite as much as Prof. Harnack feels his Christianity to be Christianity. For all that Mr. Montefiore repeatedly disclaims all authority, whether as Jewish historian, theologian, or philosopher, and claims no more for his essay than that it contains his personal impressions, without mentioning even, as he well might have mentioned, that, in the main, his views are also those of a very large section of thinking Jewry in enlightened countries. Prof. Harnack, on the other hand, seems to make no allowance whatever for the personal factor: his Christianity is the only true Christianity, and the truly original Christianity; all else that is usually associated with Christianity is simply foreign accretion, and must be discounted in any estimate of Christianity. If, with all deference, one may offer an opinion on the subject, Prof. Harnack's treatment of historical Christianity is enough to take one's breath away. Christ and the Apostles simply could not have taught anything that does not fit into Prof. Harnack's scheme. If the New Testament says anything to the contrary such passages must, the reader is led to suppose, be inaccurate. It goes without saying that anything outside the New Testament does not meet with special consideration. Excepting Christ, it would seem that no one ever really knew what Christianity was until Prof. Harnack came to enlighten the world.

From the standpoint of personal religion Prof. Harnack may be fully justified in rejecting the dogmas of the treatment of Christianity is much too personal to be described as "purely historical," even if the most liberal allowances are made for the irrepressible personal equation. The chorus of protest which the book has called forth from Christian scholars at all events confirms our assertion. Prof. Harnack's treatment is not only personal, but, to judge by the Preface, unwittingly so—which only exposes him all the more to the dangers of the subjective method.

Trinity, of original sin, of the Divinity, Atonement, and Resurrection of Christ. Christianity without all these may, and to the mind of a Jew will, be a much truer religion than Christianity with these dogmas. For some reason or other Prof. Harnack may even be justified in describing the religion he professes as a legitimate form of Christianity. But when he sets it up as the original Christianity, then he passes from personal religion to historic theology, and becomes historically suspicious in the eyes of those who take the New Testament and Church history in their ostensive signification, and will not believe that the founders, fathers, and councils of the Church had an exceptional gift of using language to conceal their thought so well that it requires the genius of Prof. Harnack (one might also add the Ripon and other Church dignitaries) to explain it all away. And this blemish in Prof. Harnack's attitude becomes more especially culpable when he goes out of his way to castigate Judaism by an unfavourable comparison of what he conceives to be Judaism with what he conceives to be Christianity, ignoring the personal element in either case. Mr. Montefiore, on the other hand, says not a word against Christianity, or any other creed. And this speaks well, not only for him, but also for Judaism, which, unlike Christianity it would seem, needs no dark background to set it off. This brings us to Prof. Harnack's reflections on Judaism, to which we shall accordingly turn now.

The dramatic manner once in vogue among Christian theologians of the old school is not yet antiquated in spite of the better example of a few of the most enlightened churchmen. In some way or other Christian divines still love to paint antiquity in colours of darkest hue; as if, forsooth, the light of the Gospel could only be appreciated and measured by means of the darkness and the gloom which it has, or is supposed to have, penetrated and dispelled. The steady, if slow, recognition of continuous historical evolution in religion, as in all things, has, how-

ever, rendered impossible the older, cruder contrasts between the Christian and the pre-Christian world. The colours have to be toned down considerably. It is no longer a contrast between gross darkness and heavenly light. Subtler distinctions must be resorted to in order to effect the desired contrast—so subtle indeed sometimes that only a gifted few are able to perceive them. But the contrasting tableaux must still be depicted at any cost. We, however, are only concerned with this habit in so far as it affects Judaism. That the older, guileless churchman, who could innocently enjoy the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies in Gospels expressly written to fulfil them—that he should have considered the Old Testament and Judaism as only introductory, and therefore inferior, to the New Testament and Christianity—that was intelligible enough. But now that such simplicity has become impossible, it is more and more difficult to effect the necessary contrast. And yet the contrast must be effected—until, at least, wiser counsels prevail. That liberal churchmen, whose sense of historic continuity readily recognizes the germs of Pentateuchal ideas and ordinances in Babylonian codes, should nevertheless persist in exaggerating contrasts between O. T. and N. T., between Christianity and Judaism—that is strange enough. Still stranger, however, is it to find liberal theologians like Prof. Harnack, after disavowing the specific dogmas of historic Christianity, still persist in disparaging Judaism, and glorifying their own refashioned Christianity at the expense of Judaism, which it so closely resembles.

One cannot impute to them conscious ill-will. The impartial and sympathetic reader is made to feel distinctly enough that there is a conflict going on in the souls of these highminded theologians—a conflict between two contending forces, one of which demands justice for the Jew, while the other insists unconditionally on glory to Christ. Hitherto a fair means of reconciliation between these rival claims has not been hit upon. The glory of

Christ, it still seems to them, necessitates the humiliation of Judaism, at some point or other. This kind of dualism is sometimes very pronounced, and leads to inconsistency and self-contradiction.

Prof. Harnack's lectures show, in a striking manner, this dualism and its consequent inconsistency and unfairness. Possibly some allowance should be made for the seductions of rhetoric. But in any case truth will out. The unfairness and inconsistency which might have been easily overlooked in separate lectures, delivered at intervals, comes forcibly home when the same lectures are read continuously in two or three readings. Indeed nothing is so simple as to repel Prof. Harnack's strictures on Judaism by means of quotations from the same volume of lectures in which they occur. Read his criticism on historic Judaism, and his criticism of historic Christianity, and you wonder how it could have escaped his attention that the former compared not at all badly with the latter. Or read his apology for historic Christianity, and you wonder how he could have failed to observe that a similar apology, nay, a better one, might have been made for the shortcomings of historic Judaism—for Judaism has arguments which are not only not available for Christianity, but actually form a very serious indictment against historic Christianity. The passages in question must be given in full, and examined closely.

First let us hear what Prof. Harnack can say of Judaism when under the influence of impartial justice: "What was there that was new in the whole movement? Was it anything new to set up the sovereignty of God, the sovereignty of the good and the holy, in opposition to all the other elements which had forced their way into religion? Did John the Baptist, did Christ himself, bring in anything that had not been proclaimed long before? Gentlemen, the question as to what is new in religion is not a question which is raised by those who live in it. What is there that can have been 'new,' seeing that mankind existed so

long before Jesus Christ, and had seen so much in the way of intelligence and knowledge. Monotheism had long been introduced, and the few possible types of monotheistic religious fervour had long made their appearance here and there, and had taken possession of whole schools, nay, of a whole people. Can the religious individualism of that Psalmist ever be surpassed in depth and vigour who confessed: 'Lord, when I have thee, I ask not after heaven and earth'? Can we go beyond what Micah said: 'He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' Centuries had passed since these words were spoken. 'What do you want with your Christ?' we are asked, principally by Jewish scholars; 'he introduced nothing new.' I answer with Wellhausen: It is quite true that what Jesus proclaimed, what John the Baptist expressed before him in his exhortation to repentance, was also found in the prophets, and even in the Jewish tradition of their time. The Pharisees themselves were in possession of it;" . . .

Of course it would not do for a Christian theologian to continue in this strain. The absolute supremacy of Christianity must be vindicated. Accordingly, as the reader may already have inferred from the semicolon at the end of the quotation, a "but" makes its appearance. "The Pharisees themselves were in possession of it; but unfortunately they were in possession of much else besides. With them it was weighted, darkened, distorted, rendered ineffective and deprived of its force by a thousand things which they also held to be religious and every whit as important as mercy and judgment. They reduced everything to one dead level, wove everything into one fabric; the good and holy was only one woof in a broad earthly warp. You ask again, then: 'What was there that was new?' The question is out of place in monotheistic religion. Ask rather: 'Had what was here proclaimed any strength and any vigour?' I answer: Take the

people of Israel and search the whole history of their religion; take history generally, and where will you find any message about God and the good that was ever so pure and so full of strength—for purity and strength go together—as we hear and read of in the Gospels? As regards purity, the spring of holiness had, indeed, long been opened; but it was choked with sands and with dirt, and its water was polluted. For Rabbis and theologians to come afterwards and distil this water, even if they were successful, makes no difference. But now the spring burst forth afresh, and broke a new way for itself through the rubbish which priests and theologians had heaped up so as to smother the true element in religion; for how often does it happen in history that theology is only the instrument by which religion is discarded! The other element was that of strength. Pharisaical teachers had proclaimed that everything was contained in the injunction to love God and one's neighbour. They spoke excellently; the words might have come out of Jesus' mouth. But what was the result of their language? That the nation, that in particular their own pupils, condemned the man who took the words seriously. All that they did was weak and, because weak, harmful. Words effect nothing; it is the power of the personality that stands behind them. But he 'taught as one having authority and not as the scribes.' Such was the impression of him which his disciples received. His words became to them 'the words of life,' seeds which sprang up and bore fruit. That was what was new."

We may just pause here to point out briefly the sophistry involved in the rhetorical flourish that the result of the Pharisaical proclamation of the injunction to love God and one's neighbour was no more than "that the nation, that in particular their own pupils, condemned the man who took these words seriously." The sequence of ideas is quite unworthy of Prof. Harnack. If Prof. Harnack does not, as he cannot, believe that Christ was condemned because

he took these words seriously, then the sequence of ideas is quite illogical, and highly sophistical, because misleading.

Passing over all the historical assumptions made by Prof. Harnack in the passage just quoted from his third lecture, overlooking, too, his unfairness in comparing the teaching of Christ with that of the Pharisees instead of with that of the prophets, we may just extract the real argument from its rhetorical embodiment. The gist of his argument is this: Christ introduced no new teachings, but he proclaimed anew the old truths in a far more efficient and effective manner than others had done. According to Prof. Harnack, then, the superiority of Christianity over Judaism lies in the efficiency of the former, as judged by its influence on its followers.

Let us, however, just skip some 140 pages of his book, and read his estimate of the efficacy of Christ's teaching, made for other purposes than that of contrasting it with Jewish teaching: "If we place ourselves about a hundred or a hundred and twenty years after the apostolic age . . . what kind of a spectacle does the Christian religion offer? We see a great ecclesiastical and political community, and side by side with it numerous 'sects' calling themselves Christian, but denied the name and bitterly opposed. . . . The law of doctrine seems at first sight to be of small scope, but all its tenets are of the widest significance; and together they embrace a profusion of metaphysical, cosmological, and historical problems; give them definite answers, and supply particulars of mankind's development from the creation up to its future form of existence. Jesus' injunctions for the conduct of life are not included in this law of doctrine; as 'the rule of discipline' they were sharply distinguished from the 'rule of faith.' . . . The distinction between priest and layman is already a well-marked characteristic of this institution; certain acts of divine worship can be performed only by the priest; his mediation is an absolute necessity. It is only by mediation that a man can approach God at all, by the mediation of right doctrine, right ordinance, and

a sacred book. The living faith seems to be transformed into a creed to be believed; devotion to Christ, into Christology; the ardent hope of the coming of 'the kingdom,' into a doctrine of immortality and deification; prophecy, into technical exegesis and theological learning; the ministers of the Spirit, into clerics; the brothers, into laymen in a state of tutelage; miracles and miraculous cures disappear altogether, or else are priestly devices; fervent prayers become solemn hymns and litanies; the 'Spirit' becomes law and compulsion."

The pure spring of Christianity, too, then, seems to have become "choked with sands and with dirt," and that at a rather early stage in its history. Nor, according to Prof. Harnack, did this pollution cease for many centuries after. Here are his estimates of Greek, and of Roman Catholicism respectively.

In Greek Catholicism, Prof. Harnack tells us, "Religion is presented as a complex system of traditional doctrine, to which the few alone have any real access, the majority of believers cannot practise it at all except as ritual. Doctrine comes to be administered in stereotyped formulas accompanied by symbolic acts. Although no inner understanding of it is thus possible, it produces the feeling of something mysterious . . . ceremony dominates everything . . . it is not easy to see how a Church is to be reformed which . . . is content with its adherents finding the Christian faith in the observance of certain ceremonies and Christian morality in keeping fast-days."

As to Roman Catholicism, "The Church is a legal institution; and it is so, not side by side with its function of preserving and distributing salvation, but it is a legal institution for the sake of this very function. . . . The Roman Church privily pushed itself into the place of the Roman World-Empire, of which it is the actual continuation; the empire has not perished, but has only undergone a transformation . . . the Roman Church is the old Roman Empire consecrated by the Gospel . . . its Popes

rule like Trajan and Marcus Aurelius; Peter and Paul have taken the place of Romulus and Remus; the bishops and archbishops, of the pro-consuls; the troops and priests and monks correspond to the legions; the Jesuits, to the imperial bodyguard. The continued influence of the old empire and its institutions may be traced in detail down to individual legal ordinances, nay, even in the very clothes."

What! one cannot help exclaiming, Christianity to all appearances dead so soon after Christ, and throughout all these centuries. Certainly not more effective than the teaching of the Hebrew prophets! But then, of course, there is the Reformation. That may have worked miracles for one branch of Christianity at any rate. And indeed our Protestant Professor does wax eloquent when he, at last, comes to speak of Protestantism.

"What do all our discoveries and inventions and our advances in outward civilization signify in comparison with the fact that to-day there are thirty millions of Germans and many more millions of Christians outside Germany who possess a religion without priests, without sacrifices, without fragments of grace, without ceremonies—a spiritual religion."

It must not, however, be supposed that it is Luther's Protestantism that our Professor has in view, in this triumphant outburst. Even Luther, according to Prof. Harnack, had serious shortcomings. Through his ignorance of the history of Christian dogmas, and of primitive Christianity, he retained the dogmas of the Trinity, and of the double nature. Other evils, too, followed, and polluted Protestantism. "Not perhaps in theory (this is how Prof. Harnack continues), but certainly in practice a double form of Christianity arose, just as in Catholicism; and . . . it still remains with us to-day. The theologian and the clergyman must defend the whole doctrine, and be orthodox; for the layman it suffices if he adheres to certain leading points, and refrains from attacking the orthodox creed. A well-known man . . . expressed

the wish that a certain inconvenient theologian would go over to the philosophical faculty; 'for then,' he said, 'instead of an unbelieving theologian we should have a believing philosopher.' Here we have the logical outcome of the contention that in the evangelical Churches, too, doctrine is something laid down for all time, and that, in spite of being generally binding, it is a matter of so much difficulty that the laity need not be expected to defend it. But if we persist in this path, and other confusions become worse confounded, and take deeper root, there is a risk of Protestantism becoming a sorry double of Catholicism."

It is not, then, Luther's Protestantism, or indeed ordinary Protestantism, as generally known, that Prof. Harnack lauds so enthusiastically as a revival of true Christianity, nay, as "a return to Christianity," after a lapse of all these un-Christian centuries. No, he tells us precisely which features, and which alone, give the Reformation and Protestantism their whole worth. Here is the passage. "Religion was taken out of the vast and monstrous fabric . . . and was reduced to its essential factors, to the Word of God and to faith . . . for in the course of its historical development, religion, by adapting itself to circumstances, attracts to itself much alien matter, and produces, in conjunction with this, a number of hybrid and apocryphal elements, which it is necessarily compelled to place under the protection of what is sacred. . . . (2nd feature) The confident belief in a God of grace. . . . (3rd feature) God's worship by the individual and the community (without mediation). Such worship . . . nothing but putting faith to practical proof. . . . These three points embrace the chief elements in the Reformation. What they involved was a renewal of religion; for not only do they denote, albeit in a fashion of their own, a return to Christianity as it originally was, but they also existed themselves in Western Catholicism, although buried in a heap of rubbish."

It is not our concern here to comment on Prof. Harnack's wholesale condemnation of almost every form of Christianity

except his own, and that of Christ in so far as he identifies it with his own; nor need we comment on his arbitrary eclecticism. Christian divines and theologians have not been slow to discuss this among themselves. We are only concerned with the bearing of these passages on Prof. Harnack's reflections on Judaism.

The preceding extracts from Prof. Harnack's reviews of the several historic forms of Christianity make it abundantly clear that, to put it mildly, the pure spring of Christianity had also become, and that very early, "choked with sands and with dirt," or, to quote the concluding words of the last citation, "buried in a heap of rubbish." Yet in spite of the contamination of this heap of rubbish, the Christian spring of holiness could survive, and be purified by the glorious succession of Christian distillers from Luther to Prof. Harnack. But the much older Jewish spring of holiness, when its water was polluted, its pollution was final. "For Rabbis and theologians to come afterwards and distil this water, even if they were successful, makes no difference." Apparently only Prof. Harnack knows the gentle art of distilling religion. For when he distils the polluted water of Christianity, then it does make a difference. And yet, sooth to say, the pure spring of Judaism has not been so irretrievably choked with rubbish. For Judaism has never lost its hold on the confident belief in a God of grace, or in the direct relationship of the individual to God, without the need of a mediator; neither has Judaism ever insisted on "a rule of faith"; nor has it drawn a hard and fast line between priests and laymen, since the cessation of sacrifices. Judaism needed no Reformation to correct its teachings on these heads. The Jewish Reformation, such as it was, had only to undo the disfigurements which mediaeval persecution had wrought on the Jews, not any defects inherent in Jewish teaching. If Jews ever did over-estimate the importance of ritual, that was generally due to well-known historical causes, which form by themselves an ample apology for any failing

in this respect. When Christianity, without the excuse of such specially inimical conditions, shows similar blemishes, then Prof. Harnack is not at a loss for an apology. For then he says, and rightly says, that "in the course of its historical development, religion, by adapting itself to circumstances, attracts to itself much alien matter, and produces, in conjunction with this, a number of hybrid and apocryphal elements, which it is necessarily compelled to place under the protection of what is sacred." And again he tells us, in another place, that "no religious movement could remain in a bodiless condition. It must elaborate forms for common life and common public worship . . . a special measure of value always attaches to forms. By being the means by which the community is kept together, the value of that to which they minister is insensibly transferred to them; or at least there is always a danger of this happening. One reason for this is that the observance of the forms can always be controlled or enforced, as the case may be; whilst for the inner life there is no control that cannot be evaded." It never seems to have occurred to Prof. Harnack that precisely the same apologies can and should be made for historic Judaism, which has, besides, also the excuse of constant persecution and all its collateral effects—an argument which is not only not available for historic Christianity, but actually forms a grave indictment against it.

If now we turn back to Prof. Harnack's unfavourable estimate of Judaism as compared with Christianity, we shall find that his whole argument breaks down. As regards the religious teachings as such of the two creeds, he himself admits that Christianity taught nothing but what Judaism had already taught before. Here are his own words: "What is there that can have been 'new,' seeing that mankind existed so long before Jesus Christ, and had seen so much in the way of intelligence and knowledge? Monotheism had long been introduced, and the few possible types of monotheistic religious fervour

had long made their appearance here and there, and had taken possession of whole schools, nay, of a whole people. Can the religious individualism of that Psalmist ever be surpassed in depth and vigour who confessed: 'Lord, when I have thee, I ask not after heaven and earth'? Can we go beyond what Micah said: 'He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' Centuries had passed since these words were spoken." If the pure spring of Judaism became polluted in course of time, so did Christianity, and more so. If Judaism and Christianity are to be judged by their results, or practical efficacy, then the proper thing to do would be to compare the civic and home life of Jews with that of Christians, and the criminal statistics of the former with those of the latter. In that case Judaism need have no apprehensions as to the result of the comparison. Jewish teaching, too, has also shown its efficacy by inspiring at all times the Jewish masses to endure a martyrdom which Christian teaching has as yet failed to prevent the Christian masses from inflicting. To say that the impression which Christ left on his disciples was that he "taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes," is quite irrelevant to the real issue. That may count in our estimate of the character of Christ himself, but does not and cannot affect our estimate of the value of his teaching as such, and its subsequent effectiveness; it cannot diminish the worth of Judaism as compared with Christianity. Had not every one of the Hebrew prophets also "taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes"? Have all Christian teachers been after the pattern of Christ? Then why should all the scribes be expected to resemble the prophets, or Christ? Or why should Judaism be condemned because its teachers have not all been of prophetic stature? Besides, if Christ only taught the older Hebrew teaching, if his message and its inspiration were both derived from the prophets of his people, then, even if he did repeat that

message with greater purity and inspiration than did his contemporary scribes, even so, that can only reflect to the glory, not to the disparagement of Judaism. After all Christ was the product of Judaism, not of Christianity. Historic Christianity, as distinguished from Prof. Harnack's Christianity, was the creation of Paul and the apostles, not of Christ.

And this brings us to the crux of the situation. Christians of all shades of opinion agree in describing Christianity as the religion of Christ. Now this description contains a serious ambiguity, as may well be suspected of an expression which does service for such different things as Catholic Christianity and Prof. Harnack's Christianity. "Of" has a subjective as well as an objective meaning. The religion of Christ, as a description of historic Christianity, can only mean the religion about Christ, or that religion which became differentiated from Judaism by certain specific dogmas concerning the person of Christ—his divinity, atonement, and resurrection. To Prof. Harnack, however, the religion of Christ, as a description of his Christianity, means neither more nor less than Christ's religion. If so—and even if we ignore its historical inaccuracy—is not Prof. Harnack really riding for a fall in first identifying Christianity with Christ's religion and then insisting on differences between Judaism and this Christianity of his? Historical Christianity, as the religion about Christ, with its dogmas of the Trinity, the divinity, atonement, and resurrection of Christ, that certainly was and is unlike Judaism, in these respects at any rate. But Christ's religion, if we accept Prof. Harnack's view on the matter, which is also shared by a great many Jews, how can that be called anything but Judaism? That in the time of Christ there were many inferior teachers of Judaism may be true enough. In the days of the prophets, too, there were many inferior teachers, and worse practitioners. The same is true also of every creed, and of every age. The really great teachers are few and far between; more

commonplace are the lesser lights, who sometimes confirm and sometimes confound the teachings of their masters. But, such side-issues apart, does not Prof. Harnack himself tell us that the religion of Christ contained nothing but the religious teachings of Israel's foremost teachers, which were also taught, even if less purely and efficiently, by his Pharisaic contemporaries? Have we any valid ground even for supposing that Christ himself ever regarded his religion as anything but Judaism? Here is Prof. Harnack's own view. "In his sayings and parables Jesus, careless of all externals, could devote himself solely to the all-important point; but how and in what forms the seed would grow was not a question which occupied his mind; he had the people of Israel with their historical ordinances before him and was not thinking of external changes." What wonder, then, that having ridden for a fall, Prof. Harnack is driven to extremities. Haunted most probably by the very close resemblance which his Christianity bears to Judaism, he seems to feel compelled to introduce distinctions however laboured or irrelevant. Besides, the whole comparison was really uncalled for. After all it is the positive content of a creed that gives it its true worth for personal religion; not its contrasting relation to some other creed.

Christianity as conceived by Prof. Harnack, and Judaism as conceived, say, by Mr. Montefiore, may each claim to possess the purest elements of true religion. Historical circumstances may have thrown a heap of rubbish into the pure spring of both Judaism and Christianity. In either case individuals have the right to select conscientiously the purer elements for their personal religion, without forfeiting thereby the right to call their personal religion by the name in which they have grown up. Historically Judaism, as compared with Christianity, may claim the advantage of longer and more pronounced historical continuity. But in any case it is altogether unfair to compare distilled Christianity with undistilled Judaism. Yet this

is just what Prof. Harnack has done. And that is what Christian theologians mostly do, and will do, until at least they will come to recognize that we cannot rightly estimate any religion except in the measure in which we live and have our being in it. Considered practically and historically no one creed can afford to throw stones at any other. On the other hand, considered in their several highest forms of expression, each creed may find considerable confirmation in every other. Each religion is a tree of life which must be measured by its topmost branch, not by its undergrowth. The total worth of the several creeds must be estimated, not by the character of its teachers only, though that is important, and not by the intrinsic value of its doctrines only, though that too is of the utmost importance, but also by the native character and total environment of their adherents. And that is something much too complex to permit of reliable comparisons. Enough that each creed contains the germs of its own perfecting. Enough that each religion is charged with ample inspiration to evoke all the idealism latent in those born within its fold. Transitions from one creed to another are never necessary, and but seldom desirable. All comparisons, especially disparaging comparisons, are therefore, to put it mildly, quite uncalled for.

We have dwelt so long on points of disagreement that the reader may carry away a wrong impression as to the real value of Prof. Harnack's lectures. As Jews our first concern was naturally enough with his adverse criticism of Judaism. But the fact that he could be refuted with his own weapons shows, as the reader may have gathered from some of the selections given, that the book contains much that is applicable to every religion, much that is as true of Judaism as it is of Christianity, or nearly so. It is to a few such passages, treating of current religious problems, that we would now direct the reader's attention. As already remarked at the commencement of this article, the following extracts may be found specially suggestive

after the recent disturbances in the Anglo-Jewish atmosphere.

In the first of these selections Prof. Harnack deals with those peculiar difficulties with which liberal Protestantism is supposed to be threatened on account of its liberal interpretation of the Gospels. *Mutatis mutandis*, the remarks will apply to liberal Judaism and its liberal interpretation of the Bible. "Protestantism reckons . . . upon the Gospel being something so simple, so divine, and therefore so truly human, as to be most certain of being understood when it is left entirely free, and also as to produce essentially the same experiences and convictions in individual souls (in spite of errors in detail) . . . And when we are reproached with our divisions and told that Protestantism has as many doctrines as heads, we reply, 'So it has, but we do not wish it otherwise; on the contrary we want still more freedom, still greater individuality in utterance and in doctrine; the historical circumstances necessitating the formation of national and free churches have imposed only too many rules and limitations upon us, even though they be not proclaimed as divine ordinances; we want still more confidence in the inner strength and unifying power of the Gospel, which is more certain to prevail in free conflict than under guardianship.'" In the case of Anglo-Jewry there is, of course, no State interference, as in the case of the national church. But the influence of an institution such as the United Synagogue, in its present constitution, is closely analogous.

The following sentence (already quoted above, with its context) needs no comment: "The theologian and the clergyman must defend the whole doctrine, and be orthodox; for the layman it suffices if he adheres to certain leading points, and refrains from attacking the orthodox creed." This "double form" of religion, as Prof. Harnack rightly calls it, is possibly more rampant in our midst than elsewhere. Nothing so common as your synagogue warden who combines personal heterodoxy with strong views on

the indispensableness of vicarious orthodoxy in his minister. This kind of dualism, coupled with general indifference, may amply account for the apparent conservatism of Anglo-Jewry in spite of its actual liberalism. Tempting as it is to philosophize on these matters, we must pass on. It will be sufficient to quote Prof. Harnack once more, leaving it to the reader to make the necessary modification and application. "If those who think that the Reformation is done with cannot see that its continuance in the sense of a pure understanding of God's word is a question of life and death for Protestantism . . . let them at least promote the liberty for which Luther fought in his best days: 'Let the minds of men rush against one another and strike; if some are meanwhile led astray—well! that is what we must expect in war; where there is battle and slaughter, some must fall and be wounded, but whoso fights honestly will receive the crown.' The reason why the catholicizing of the churches . . . (i.e. their) becoming churches of ordinance, ceremony, and doctrine—is so burning a question, is that three powerful forces are working together to further this development. First there is the indifference of the masses. The tendency of all indifference is to put all religion on the same plane with authority and tradition, but also with priests, hierarchies, and the cult of ceremonies. It puts religion there, and then complains of the external character and stationary condition of religion, and of the 'pretensions' of the clergy; nay it is capable apparently, at one and the same moment, of mingling those complaints with abuse, of contemptuously jeering at every active expression of religious feeling, and doing homage at every kind of ceremony. . . . The second force . . . is what I may call 'natural religion.' Those who live by fear and hope; whose chief endeavour is to find some authority in matters of religion; . . . who are looking for . . . some aesthetic transfiguration, or some violent form of assistance . . . all these people are . . . putting religion on the same Catholic plane . . . The third force . . . is the State. We must not

blame the State for setting the chief store by the conservative influence which religion and the churches exercise, and the subsidiary effects which they produce in respect of reverence, obedience, and public order. But this is just why the State protects all the elements of stability in the churches, and seeks to keep them from every minor movement that would call their 'public utility' into question; nay, it has tried often enough to approximate the Church to the police, and employ it as a means of maintaining order in the State."

One more extract and we bring this article to a close. It forms the concluding passage of Prof. Harnack's lectures. The subject is the significance of religion and its relation to science, or knowledge of the world, and Prof. Harnack's brief remarks must evoke the warm admiration of Jews as well as Christians. Indeed the passage loses nothing in force or significance if we substitute "Bible" for "Gospel," and "Jewish" for "Christian."

There are no new difficulties, Prof. Harnack tells us. "The real difficulties in the way of the religion of the Gospel remain the old ones. In face of them we can 'prove' nothing, for our proofs are only variations of our convictions. But the course which history has taken has surely opened up a wide province in which the Christian sense of brotherhood must give practical proof of itself quite otherwise than it knew how, or was able, to do in the early centuries—I mean the social province. There a tremendous task confronts us, and in the measure in which we accomplish it shall we be able to answer with a better heart the deepest of all questions—the question of the significance of life. Gentlemen, it is religion, the love of God and neighbour, which gives life a meaning; knowledge cannot do it. Let me, if you please, speak of my own experience, as one who for thirty years has taken an earnest interest in these things. Pure knowledge is a glorious thing, and woe to the man who holds it light, or blunts his sense for it. But to the question, 'Whence,

whither, and to what purpose?' it gives an answer to-day as little as it did two or three thousand years ago. It does, indeed, instruct us in facts; it detects inconsistencies; it links phenomena; it corrects the deceptions of sense and idea. But where and how the curve of the world and the curve of our own life begin—that curve of which it shows us only a section—and whither this curve leads, knowledge does not tell us. But if with a steady will we affirm the forces and the standards, which, on the summits of our inner life, shine out as the highest good, nay, as our real self; if we are earnest and courageous enough to accept them as the great Reality, and direct our lives by them; and if we then look on the course of mankind's history, follow its upward development, and search, in strenuous and patient service, for the communion of minds in it, we shall not faint in weariness and despair, but become certain of God, of the God whom Jesus Christ called his Father, and who is also our Father."

A. WOLF.